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The considerable progress achieved in the United States in expanding and improving research and instruction in foreign area studies programs has now become one of its major problems. In the past few years, administrators, foreign area specialists, American government, and private foundations, persuaded that all the problems have been solved, have failed to recognize that the hazards of the future are far more challenging than those already overcome. If the program is to advance, (1) the new goals must be identified, (2) ways of achieving them must be planned, and (3) such organizations as the American Council of Learned Societies must continue to function in making those concerned aware of current difficulties and opportunities, in assisting them in resolving organizational problems, and in creating meaningful standards for broadening the scope of the areas studied. (CW)

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THE FUTURE OF AREA STUDIES

ROBERT F. BYRNES

Distinguished Professor of History at Indiana University, Robert F. Byrnes has long been associated with the development of area studies in the United States. He is the author of Anti-Semitism in Modern France: The Prelude to the Dreyfus Affair *and* Bibliography of American Publications on East-Central Europe, 1945-1957; *he is a co-author of the seven volume series* East-Central Europe under the Communists. *In 1950 he was a member of the Institute for Advanced Studies and a Guggenheim Fellow. Since 1958 he has been chairman of the Inter-University Travel Grants Committee. Professor Byrnes originally presented this paper at the Annual Meeting of the ACLS in January 1968 at Princeton.*

I very much appreciate the opportunity to discuss with you a question which is very important for American education at all levels, the future of foreign area studies. I particularly appreciate this opportunity on behalf of all those especially interested in area studies to thank the American Council of Learned Societies and its executives, Mortimer Graves, Frederick Burkhardt, and Gordon Turner, for their leadership and assistance to scholar-teachers in American universities interested in expanding and improving teaching and research concerning other parts of the world. One of the revolutions in American education is due in good part to the leadership which the ACLS has provided, and I hope you all know that those of us who have participated in this work have deep gratitude for this impressive ACLS contribution.

None of us should rest on his laurels, however, and I hope to excite you concerning some of the problems and opportunities which face us all. In short, I am not going to ask what you have done lately for us, but I am going to suggest some of the ways the ACLS can help in the future.

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No scholar facing a subject such as this can be but overwhelmed by his own limitations. One of the hazards, of course, is that I suffer from closeness to one foreign area and that I naturally know a great deal more about one university than I do about the others. A series of variables which will clearly affect area studies contribute an even greater hazard. Some of these variables will remain beyond our control, such as developments in domestic and international politics and in the atmosphere in which these affairs shall be conducted. We can have varying degrees of influence on other variables, but student interest, the policies of our colleges and universities, and decisions by the American government concerning funding the International Education Act are quite beyond our capacity to direct. Similarly, we may not be able to iden-

tify and train the playmakers or builders or leaders who can make area study programs lively and effective.

Even so, all of us, and organizations such as the ACLS, have considerable capacity for influencing the course of developments. I hope that my effort to describe the achievements of the past thirty years, to analyze the present situation, and to identify problems and opportunities will be useful to the Council in defining its policies for the next decade or so.

The achievements of the graduate programs established to expand and improve research and instruction concerning the so-called non-Western areas throughout the United States have been extraordinary. In every one of these areas, Russia and Eastern Europe, Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, Latin America, East Asia, areas such as those covered by Uralic and Altaic programs, and those which emphasize comparative studies of foreign areas, we have made such progress that a scholar-teacher who had not visited our campuses since 1938 would believe himself in another world. The general level of research and instruction and the quality of training provided graduate students are remarkably high. In fact, in some disciplines and in some areas American research and instruction is clearly the best in the world, even though our study of these areas in some cases dates largely from the 1930's. The quality of the young men and women we are now educating is so high and the character and style of their training so excellent that those of my generation often rejoice that we have tenure positions. Area study centers are now scattered throughout the United States, although only twenty years ago they were concentrated almost entirely on the Eastern and the Western coasts. Indeed, the proliferation of area centers has been so great that one could argue that we need a kind of birth control program to prevent the dissipation of our resources.

The foreign area programs have contributed to another one of the significant revolutions affecting American education since the Second World War, the extraordinary expansion and improvment of foreign language teaching at every level of instruction. It is a revolution in which the ACLS has played a prominent role. This change has not only affected the young scholars and teachers, whose knowledge of foreign languages is much greater in general that that of their predecessors, but, in part through them, it has affected the level and quantity of foreign language instruction in the institutions in which they teach and work. This quiet but significant change has transformed the very atmosphere of the college campus and has contributed heavily to changing our undergraduates' view of the world. More visible, but perhaps less significant in this change, have been the research publications of high quality produced in the research centers and by the young scholars trained there. These volumes have contributed enormously to improving our understanding of foreign societies and cultures. Together with the scholarly journals which now abound and the guides and bibliographies

which are beginning to pour forth, they constitute a base on which future research and understanding will be built.

At the same time, American universities and institutions such as the New York Public Library and the Library of Congress have in the last three decades created most impressive collections of research materials on other parts of the world. Thirty years ago, American scholars in most fields of foreign study had to go to Western European libraries and to other parts of the world even to begin their scholarly research. Now, however, in most areas of research and study, several American libraries possess collections in which research can not only be begun but can also be completed. For example, five or six libraries in the United States have large and better organized collections with regard to the Soviet Union than all of the libraries in Western Europe combined, even though several libraries in Western Europe thirty years ago had better collections than any single American institution.

Less visible, but perhaps even more significant, is the vastly increased attention devoted to foreign areas in undergraduate education and the remarkable increase of understanding of these areas among the general public. On most university campuses, hundreds and even thousands of undergraduates now take courses concerning foreign areas which would have been considered exotic as recently as ten or twenty years ago. A number of small colleges, including several in the state of Indiana, have so changed their faculty, their curriculum, and the whole framework in which they view the world that the kind and quality of education they are providing has clearly undergone a revolution in as short a period as ten years. Only a fraction of our undergraduates have yet been affected, and American universities and colleges in general still teach in an Anglo-Saxon atmosphere, but a very significant change has already occurred.

In short, considerable progress has been made, so much so that progress or prosperity has now become one of our major problems. Our very successes in foreign area studies have persuaded some administrators and foreign area specialists that all our problems have in fact been solved. Indeed, some administrators now believe that foreign area programs have been so successful that they should now wither away. Some specialists are persuaded that we are producing enough specialists and that we can relax.

We have, in fact, been on a kind of plateau for the last few years. The proliferation of foreign area centers represents a problem, as well as a significant achievement, and I am distressed both by the absence of vitality in some well-established centers and by what one might call defections of scholars from foreign areas. The continued whining concerning the need for money suggests that the vigor and dynamism which helped promote the foreign area study revolution is now lacking, because we now have greater access to funds than the founders of this movement could have imagined. Moreover, most area centers are located in thriving universities. While every institution faces heavy de-

mands upon its resources, anyone familiar with the history of American higher education knows that scholarship and teaching have never been so generously supported as now.

In other words, our main problem is that the situation has changed, not only since 1938 but even since 1958, and that we who are concerned with higher education must change also. To begin with, we should recognize that we have successfully created institutions for training an adequate number of specialists for most foreign areas. There are exceptions, such as Vietnam, Southeast Asia in general, India, and Eastern Europe; but by and large, American institutions have created an adequate number of excellent graduate programs for training teachers and scholars for each of the foreign areas. Our main problem is that we should now begin to revise the training we provide, because we have placed too high an emphasis upon scholarship as compared to teaching. We are, in short, producing a sufficient number of theologians; we now need to produce more parish priests who will go out into the colleges and universities to increase enormously the quality and quantity of undergraduate education on all the foreign areas.

Within the universities, administrators and faculty must see the foreign area centers as constituent and essential elements, not as luxuries or extras tolerated so long as they are financed by a foundation or by the federal government. A Russian and East European Institute, or a Latin American Studies Program, must be recognized as essential and as natural a part of the university organization as the Department of Chemistry. Perhaps even more important, the universities must see that our main problem is not training a handful of specialists as scholar-teachers for areas of the world previously neglected, but a massive effort to change the spirit and atmosphere of general education for all undergraduate and graduate students. Producing several specialists on Africa is an important contribution, but it should not deflect us from the larger goal, which is educating millions of students concerning the nature of the world in which they live and the quality and variety of other cultures. This second goal is less dramatic, and it is more difficult to achieve, but it is also more central to the entire process of American education. It can be achieved only if the universities and colleges recognize that the framework in which we live and work has changed, but that American education continues to concentrate upon the United States and Western Europe.

Bringing about this spiritual transformation in American education will be enormously difficult. At its very heart lies the character and quality of the faculty, because we cannot expect our students to be transformed if their instructors have not changed. Most of us assume that faculties will be transformed by the growing number of specialists on particular foreign areas and by a gradual change of intellectual climate in the United States, which is probably due more to our outstanding journals and newspapers, and to radio and television and the pressure of news, than it is to the universities. However, we cannot

afford to wait for this slow evolution, and we cannot entrust the mass media to contribute effectively to that transformation. In short, universities and colleges must begin the systematic retraining of every faculty member, whether he teaches chemistry or psychology, whether he is a specialist in American history or in public administration.

It is senseless in 1968 for great universities, or even small colleges, to have large numbers of faculty members who do not understand, speak, read, and write at least one foreign language, who do not have a significant amount of information concerning at least one foreign culture, and who do not take the entire world, its past as well as its future, into consideration in research and instruction in their own discipline, whatever it may be. Sensible and far-sighted administrators will therefore create and develop programs, as other institutions such as the American army and the Catholic Church have, to enable their established faculty members to acquire this new information and insight. Given the resources of American universities, the kinds of education they provide now to specialists, and the opportunities for study and travel abroad, one can see that creating a system which would transform the faculty of any major institution within as short a time as ten years requires only recognition of the problem and administrative sense.

Our major universities are not the only institutions of higher learning which must undergo this reformation, because our hundreds of colleges face the same need. In fact, the universities and the colleges should recognize that they have an obligation to help effect this change in all of American education by breaking through the sheepskin curtain which now separates the colleges and the universities from the high schools. In fact, we should recognize that *Time, Life,* and American radio and television have a far greater impact upon the American public and its view of the world than does American higher education. I would suggest, for example, that the recent short essay by Professor James Billington of Princeton University in *Life* will have a greater impact on the American view of Russia than the numerous excellent research and scholarly books which he has written and which he will write in the future.

The national character of the problems we face suggests that educational institutions should no longer consider themselves as sovereign independent states, but should cooperate among themselves more than they have in the past. ACLS, SSRC, and organizations such as the Inter-University Committee have helped create cooperative enterprises among American universities. The ACLS has also helped stimulate a number of promising cooperative programs for study abroad and for collecting research materials. However, it is ridiculous for institutions within the same city to conceal from each other their plans and programs. It is even more ridiculous for each of them to devote scarce intellectual resources to separate programs on which they could combine to their mutual benefit. In fact, one of our principal needs is the

creation of regional and national associations of universities and colleges to face common problems, such as that of building adequate library collections. No one institution, no matter how rich it is, can provide the kinds of services to its scholars and students necessary in the years ahead. Institutions should therefore cooperate in a far more vigorous and effective way than they have in the past. This cooperation should also apply to study abroad, where there is remarkable waste in establishing and maintaining centers. In fact, creating cooperative programs for study abroad might eliminate such problems as were created by Camelot, which threatened to destroy opportunities for research and instruction throughout Latin America.

The Camelot experience, and others like it in other parts of the world, suggest that our universities and organizations such as ACLS should establish effective scholar and student relationships with universities and scholarly associations in other countries. We are, after all, engaged in the same intellectual enterprise.

American foundations, which have apparently begun to turn away from supporting foreign area studies, should also rethink their responsibilities and obligations, as should the American government. Indeed, the moratorium which we now face in receiving federal funding should be used so that the enlarged flow which will one day reach us can be put to most effective use.

In short, when I review area studies, their past, and their future, I am convinced that we have for the past few years been resting on a plateau, much as some of the societies which Mr. Arnold Toynbee has studied. As Mr. Toynbee has pointed out, societies in history after considerable progress have often found that they have reached a plateau, with an impressive view of the territory which they have traversed but with a frightening view of the heights which still remain. Even more stunning has been the discovery that the plateau is really but a ledge.

We are precisely in this situation. We have come a great distance, but we could easily topple from the height we have reached. At the same time, we have a great distance to go, with the hazards of the future much more challenging than those recently overcome. Moreover, as any mountainclimber knows, overcoming these hazards requires both individual initiative and leadership, and skilled teamwork. We must, therefore, identify our goals, plan ways of achieving them, and then cooperate —if we hope to advance. The alternative is the collapse of foreign area studies, or a gracious decline from what will appear to have been a Golden Era.

In this situation, the ACLS should continue to play the important role it has played in the past. It should help inform universities and individual scholar-teachers of the difficulties and opportunities we face. It should assist them to resolve the organizational problems by serving as a kind of central bank for information and ideas. It should help

create more effective techniques and standards for distributing government funds for expanding instruction concerning other areas of the world. Above all, it should continue to provide imagination and leadership, which will be even more essential in the years ahead than they have been in the past three decades.